Period 9: Long Essay Question

**Compare and contrast the patterns of immigration in the period 1880 to 1928 to the patterns of immigration in the period 1965 to 2000.**

* State a relevant thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question.
* Support the argument with evidence, using specific examples.
* Apply historical thinking skills as directed by the question.
* Synthesize the elements above into a persuasive essay that extends the argument, connects it to a different historical context, or connects it to a different category of analysis.

Student Sample Response:

In the early 1800s, there was an influx of “New Immigrants” coming to the United States. Similarly in 1965 there was another influx in immigration. Using Comparison, both these rises in immigration led to the government passing laws to restrict the amount of people allowed in America so that America wouldn’t become overpopulated. Although both groups of immigrants came to America for similar reasons, they differed in ethnicity and in their challenges to assimilate as well as in the way the government reacted towards them.

Both the “New Immigrants” and the immigrants from 1965 had similar reasons for coming to the United States. The first and most obvious reason is overpopulation because people were living longer due to better medicine and food, in their native countries. Because of the extreme rise in population in their country of origin there were less food and less opportunity which meant survival for all those who stayed would struggle immensely. So, the foreigners would immigrate to the United States for jobs and opportunity to have the American dream. Also, a world-wide shift towards industry in both periods led to immigration to the United States for jobs in factories because farmers were losing money in their past country. In the 1880’s the steamship had been invented so travel to United States was made easier. Another obvious reason for immigration was persecution both religious and political. For example, the Jewish people who lived in Russia were forced to leave their country so they came to America because of the First Amendment which gave them freedom of religion. This along with political freedom pulled many other immigrants to America. This is how two groups of immigrants were similar.

However, the two periods of immigration into the United States differed in their country of origin and how well they assimilated because of that. In the 1880’s the “New Immigrants” were from southern and eastern Europe. This group couldn’t speak English and they were illiterate which led to communication barriers thus hindering their ability to assimilate. Also, they differed in their culture religiously and politically. As far as religion they were anything but the typical Protestant Christian; they also came from an autocratic government where they had no say in how their old country was run so the democratic government was unfamiliar to them. The immigrants from the 1960’s were primarily from Latin America and Asia, specifically Veitnam. The Latinos had a much easier time assimilating because they were not from several scattered Europeans countries and they came in large numbers. Also, they all went to the same regions. Mexican-Americans, for example, immigrated into Texas and California mainly so they stayed in touch with their mother culture but didn’t have a difficult time assimilating. The later immigration and assimilation of the Vietnamese occurred after South Vietnam fell due the Vietnam war; these immigrants stayed in army barracks and assimilated there. These are the ways that the two periods of immigration differed.

An additional way the two periods differed was how the government reacted to them. In the late 1800’s to the 1920’s the federal government was laissez-faire which meant they didn’t really help them. For this reason other powerful people like Boss Tweed and Andrew Carnegie helped them. Other more charitable help was given by churches and settlement houses which were run by women like Jane Addams and Lillian Wald. The government although laissez-faire tried to limit immigration by passing acts to restrict it. The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress because the Chinese immigrants kept taking jobs from “more deserving” natives; this act lasted for about a decade. Another set of acts were the Emergency Quota Act and Immigration Restriction Act in the early 1900’s which limited the amount of immigrants allowed into America based on a percentage from previous immigration; this was primarily meant to limit immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. In the late 1900’s when America started getting more immigrants from Latin America and Asia by passing the Immigration Reform and Control Act which was really meant to choke of illegal entry into the United States. In these ways the two periods differed because of the government’s reaction.

In summation, both sets of immigrants came to America for similar reasons, however, they differed in ethnicity and assimilation, as well as governmental reaction to them. Immigration stopped the 1920’s because of the Red Scare which led to fear of communism and the Great Depression which led to the deportation of Mexicans supported by president Herbert Hoover. The immigration of the second period (1965-2000) halted because of the tragic 9-11 terrorist attack as well as a similar continuation in the deportation of Mexicans.

SCORING

Thesis – 1 point available

The essay earns 1 point for thesis. Although somewhat vague, the essay does present a thesis which addresses the question and provides a direction for the essay. The thesis is sustained throughout the essay and addresses both similarities and differences.

Support for Argument - 2 points available

The essay earns 1 point for supporting its argument. The essay contains some information that supports the thesis. Most of the specific factual support is found in the last body paragraph and supports the argument regarding the different responses to immigrants between the two time periods. However, while the essay does argue that “laissez faire” governmental approach in the Gilded Age influenced the government’s immigration policy, its connections are faulty – for example, the argument that a “hands off” approach led to the Chinese Exclusion Act simply does not stand up. This is not sufficient to earn the second point for supporting the argument.

Comparison – 2 points available

The essay earns 1 point for comparison. While simplistic in its argumentation, the essay nonetheless does describe both similarities and differences between the two time periods. It indicates that similarities are found in motivations to leave home countries and that differences are found in assimilation challenges and governmental policy. The essay does not earn the second point because it does not analyze the reasons for these similarities and differences in a persuasive manner. It contains very little information regarding the second time period, and makes no attempt to analyze immigration or governmental policy in the time period.

Synthesis – 1 point available

The essay does not earn a point for synthesis. This essay does not seem to attempt any of the categories that would qualify for the synthesis point. It does not extend where it may have been possible – for example, the argument that “new immigrants” face additional challenge in assimilating due to language barriers (which is curiously contrasted with immigrants from 1965-2000, many of whom also did not speak English) could easily be contrasted with Irish immigrants who arrived in the 1840s and 1850s.

Score – 3/6 points